



**American Red Cross
Statement to the Committee on Public Health
State of Connecticut General Assembly– Proposed Bill 5732
February 27, 2013**

***Testimony of Patricia Pisciotto, M.D.
American Red Cross – Northeast Division***

Chairpersons Representative Susan Johnson, Senator Terry Gerratana and Members of the Committee on Public Health:

Good Afternoon. My name is Dr. Patricia Pisciotto. I am Chief Medical Officer for the American Red Cross Blood Services Northeast Division, a position I have held since 2007. I have been involved in blood banking as an M.D. for over 30 years. I am board certified in the specialties of pediatric hematology/oncology and blood banking/transfusion medicine. In my role at the Red Cross, I am committed to donor and patient safety.

The American Red Cross does not support state legislation mandating a nurse be present at every blood drive in the State of Connecticut, which could result in cancellation of blood drives and impact the availability of blood to our patients in Connecticut. The valuable clinical skills that nurses possess in the care of sick patients are not required at every blood drive to ensure donor safety. As a seasoned physician with many years of hospital and blood center experience, I do not fundamentally believe that this requirement is needed. We encourage nurses to apply for all open positions for which they are qualified. Presently, almost 25% of our collection staff are licensed nurses.

Blood donors are volunteers who are thoroughly screened by trained Red Cross staff members before they are allowed to donate. We are committed to the health and safety of our donors, and every patient who receives blood. The American Red Cross trains every member of our collection staff in a twelve-week program to ensure compliance with regulatory requirements of the FDA, the professional standards set by the AABB, and our own high standards of performance. In the past twelve months, even with extensive training and background checks, 76% of Collections Staff passed training and were retained as full time staff.

Detailed regulations put forth by both federal and state agencies, as well as professional standards set by organizations such as AABB, ensure a careful screening process for each blood donor candidate by our highly trained staff prior to acceptance as a donor. Our staff is highly trained to provide care to those donors who experience a reaction. Reactions are usually of a minor nature, such as feeling faint or lightheaded.

It is important to know that the Connecticut Blood Region, and all Red Cross Blood Regions across the country, have dedicated physicians who are on-call 24 hours a day to answer any questions that

arise at blood drives. If a significant medical emergency arises, which is rare, definitive treatment would be obtained by calling 911, regardless of the staff present at a blood drive.

I urge you to continue to support the American Red Cross and our lifesaving mission by not supporting the requirement in Bill #5732 requiring licensed nurses at blood drives.

**80 students were trained in the past twelve months.*